



Born Again to a Living Hope:

The Work of the Kingdom

October 23, 2016

TEXT: 1 PETER 1:13-21

Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. (1 Pe 1:13-21)

CONTEXT:

Peter's first letter was written about the year 63. The letter is certainly a reflection of the charge that Christ had given him after his resurrection: *When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." (Jn 21:15)*

Peter was concerned for the sheep who fled under persecution to Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. It is possible that these Christians fled due to the persecution of the Roman empire in the early 60's. Initially, Christians were first Jews and they appeared to be a small branch of the traditional Jewish faith. No government action was taken against them. However, when it became clear that Christianity was not a branch of the accepted Jewish faith, the Roman government began its persecution. It began with Paul's defense of the Christian faith in a Roman court (Phil. 1:12-24). His second defense failed and he was martyred (2 Tim 4:16-18). Next Nero blamed the great fire of Rome on the Christians and persecution increased (A.D. 64).

Through it all, Christians were very much convinced that Christ would return soon (near-future) and as such, both Paul and Peter had admonished the believers to live life with great expectation of Christ's return (cf. 1 & 2 Thessalonians). Peter's second letter addresses the fact that Christians were scoffed at because Christ had not returned as soon as they expected (2 Peter 3:4-10). However, he concludes with what I believe to be a focus for both of his letters:

Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (2 Pe 3:11-13)

I do not believe it was wrong for these 7th century Christians to eagerly wait for Christ's return. In fact, it should be our daily focus to wait eagerly for Christ and to work hard. Indeed, this is how the Christian wages war daily and advances the Kingdom of God.

OUR DIVINE CALL:

One quick caveat: The word call or calling has been horribly perverted in Christian culture. I am not referring to the selfish, me type of “call” that we have invented in our own sinful minds. Rather, I am referring to the Biblical calling of God, where God calls and someone repents and believes. All of us have been “called” out of darkness like Lazarus coming out of the tomb.

Peter’s introduction says a lot about who we are in Christ:

- We are elected and **chosen**. (not just in times of peace but also in troubling times) (v1)
- We are sanctified by his Spirit. (v2)
- We are selected to be born again in Christ! (v3)
- We are chosen to have an unfading inheritance. (v4)
- According to Paul, we are called to be **ambassadors** for Christ:

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2 Co 5:20)

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. (Jn 15:16)

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Eph 2:10)

- We are called to be **separate** (v 14-16)

“As Obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’” 1 Pe 1:14-16

“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet. “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. (Mt 5:13–14)

No matter the circumstance, our divine call (from darkness to light) should bring us joy, according to Peter.

- We are born again, have a living hope, a guarded inheritance in heaven for us and...“In this you rejoice...” (v 6).
- “Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory...”

GOD’S CHARGE (PURPOSE) FOR THOSE HE CALLED:

Peter reveals the general purpose or charge of the Christian at the beginning of chapter two of his letter. The believer is called out of darkness to serve a function.

1. We are to be a **“living stone.”** (1 Pe 2:4-8)

- Just as King Solomon ordered stonecutters to quarry “great costly stones” for the building of the temple (1 Ki 5:17), God spared no expense in sending his Son to be the “cornerstone” of the Church. Christians are described as “living stones” that will build the dwelling place of God.
- *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the*

household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Eph 2:19–22)

- The Church is compared to a building; Christ is her foundation and cornerstone; The Church is founded upon Christ and unified around him; the building is fitly framed together and united in Christ; the Church grows into a holy temple in which there is communion between God and his people.
- To Christ we are living stones that are chosen and precious!

2. We are a “people for his own possession.”

- God’s possession is to be a chosen race, a royal priesthood and a **holy** nation.
- Saints, please see the joy in all of this: Before Christ came into your lives, you were enemies of God and the recipient of his anger and wrath. Now, says Peter, you are God’s people who received mercy!

Peter explains in his letter that we are called out of darkness and are to be living stones for the following reason: “... *that [we] may proclaim the excellencies of him who called [us] out of darkness into his marvelous light.*” (1 Pe 2:9)

PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN LIVING TO PLEASE OUR KING:

What does this look like practically? We automatically think of the obvious; how we disciple, evangelize and teach others. Peter’s letter, however, focuses on our living (in good or bad conditions) and our central motivation of Christ and his Kingdom.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN RELATION TO GOVERNMENT:

Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.

Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. (1 Pe 2:13–21)

- For these Christians, government was certainly not their friend. Yet, they were called out of darkness to live under an oppressive Roman government.
- As “**living stones**” who are used to build the Kingdom of God, we should continue to do good and live Godly under all forms of government (This also includes any “master” who is above us whether just or unjust).
- Our Lord calls this kind of living “gracious” in his eyes—especially when the Christian suffers for the sake of Christ. Peter himself was recorded rejoicing and counted it worthy to suffer for Christ’s name (Acts 5:40-42).

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN RELATION TO FAMILY:

- Yes, even our family life can be a beacon of light in a dark world. Yes, simply having an orderly home can advance the Kingdom of God.
- We have been called out of darkness to show a dark world a representation of Christ and his bride! Imagine a husband submitted to Christ; a husband who loves and leads his wife and family. Imagine a wife who is submitted to her husband and nurtures her family! Why? Because they have been **chosen** by God to do so!
- Peter explains that Christian wives have been chosen to “adorn” themselves differently: “but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious.” (1 Pe 3:4)
- Peter also explains that Christian husbands are chosen to be understanding, and show honor to their wives; not just for a healthy marriage but to keep his prayers from being hindered! (1 Pe 3:7)

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN RELATION TO THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

Peter shifts to paint a picture of what “living stones” should look like to each other and the world.

- In the midst of persecution or even in days of peace, our duty still remains; to be unified and different (1 Pe 3:8).
- Peter states that we were chosen and called to live this way and in doing so there is a blessing!
- Truly, there is a win-win benefit for God’s chosen people: Peter says, if we are zealous for what is good, we are blessed. If we suffer for doing good, we are blessed. (1 Pe 3:13) So, do good!
- “It is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil.” (vs 17)

Family, in order for these Christians to live the way God called them to live, they had to have the proper perspective. They had to be reminded of the blessing of being chosen, the blessing of a special charge and the joy this brings. The result was not accidental Christian living, but joyful, heaven focused, Spirit filled, intentional living!

- There is daily joy in living for Christ on **purpose**—with intention.
- These saints were waiting for the imminent return of Christ, so Christ was the motive for how they lived.
- When “living stones” live for Christ, trials will come. However, if you must suffer for the name of Christ, do not be ashamed, but glorify God! (1 Pe 4:16) “Let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.” (1 Pe 4:19)

FINAL EXHORTATION:

The Christian’s duty is to love the Lord, do his will, serve his chosen people, evangelize to the lost, and to live a life that, prayerfully, aids in the salvation of God’s enemies. This is an intentional, honorable and joyful work that we are charged to do. So let’s do it!

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. (1 Co 9:24) CRCC, fight the good fight; finish the race, and keep the faith. “Henceforth there is laid up for [you] the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to [you] on that Day, and not only to [you] but also to all who have loved his appearing.” (2 Ti 4:7–8) So let us, “lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Heb 12:1–2)